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SUBJECT: NORDICS SEEK DIRECTION FOR NATO-EU INITIATIVE

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I. CHRISTOPHER MURRAY FOR REASON 1.  
4B/D

¶1. (C) BEGIN SUMMARY: Finnish PSC PermRep and Norwegian EU Ambassador approached Charge on June 18 to seek U.S. views on NATO-EU relations, which they are concerned could further deteriorate if there are no organized efforts to improve the present dynamic. Five Nordic countries -- some members of the EU, some of NATO and some both -- have been meeting to discuss how they might jointly work to advance NATO-EU relations. The Norwegian Ambassador singled out the most recent NAC-PSC meeting held on February 25, comprising only a desultory discussion on Bosnia, as emblematic of the whole problem. Both Ambassadors said that the fundamental question in determining how to proceed is whether progress can be made on NATO-EU relations without progress on the core issue of Turkey-Cyprus. Finland's ambassador asked whether the U.S. would be willing to play a role in reaching out to Turkey on this issue. We told them that the U.S. works closely with Turkey in Ankara and at NATO, but it is important to remember that neither Turkey nor the United States is a member of the EU and Turkey might need to hear the right message from EU member states. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) On June 18, Charge and political officer met with Norwegian Ambassador to the EU Oda Sletnes and Finnish Political and Security Committee Ambassador Anne Sipilainen at their request to discuss NATO-EU relations. Sletnes expressed her concern at the present state of NATO-EU relations. She emphasized that this was not a new concern for the Nordics, referring to a March 5 letter on this issue that was jointly sent by the Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian Foreign Ministers to EU HiRep Solana, but that no tangible progress had been made. She said that given the importance of NATO-EU cooperation in Kosovo and Afghanistan, this was an issue that needed to be addressed. Although France initially had hoped to make progress in this area during its EU Presidency, French ambition was falling off due to difficulties with Ankara and there were low expectations for the July 7 NATO-EU Seminar in Paris. Sletnes invited a free-flowing and informal conversation that signaled the Nordics' objective at this time is to gather ideas rather than define policy.

¶3. (C) Sletnes revealed that NATO and EU Ambassadors from five Nordic countries: Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Denmark had been engaged in an intense series of meetings to determine how they could contribute to better NATO-EU relations. The Nordic nations felt that they had a relevant perspective to share, as these similar countries are in different "constellations," with some Nordics members of NATO and others belonging to the EU. Sletnes said the Nordics are now ready to approach key countries such as the U.S., France, Germany and the UK. If a Nordic role would be welcomed by these key countries and they agree that that "conditions

exist to permit going forward" with the initiative, the Nordics were ready to identify concrete steps that might be taken to stimulate progress. She outlined a few these ideas: working to ensure that Turkey would be offered the opportunity to participate in the European Defense Agency; creating additional opportunities for meaningful political consultation and being more inclusive towards Turkey in regards to EU exercises.

¶4. (C) Charge welcomed the effort to identify discrete areas in which limited progress might be made. He noted that the EU's Robert Cooper was fond of stating that no EU-NATO problem exists, only a Turkey-Cyprus problem. Sletnes agreed that Turkey-Cyprus problem needed to be resolved and would not go away without the efforts of third parties. Finnish Ambassador Sipilainen who had been content to let Sletnes do most of the talking, inquired as to whether the U.S. was in a dialogue with Turkey on this issue. She indicated that "some" were very cautious about taking any steps that might elicit blowback from Ankara. She said that after the Irish rejection of the Lisbon Treaty there was limited appetite among EU member states to move quickly to take on difficult issues. Although France had good intentions, Sipilainen described expectations for the upcoming EU Summit as low.

¶5. (C) Sipilainen noted that Helsinki had been hopeful that the positive evolution of the situation in Cyprus might translate into progress in NATO-EU relations. Unfortunately, the new Cypriot leadership was not seized with PfP or NATO-EU issues. They saw these issues merely as bargaining chips, she commented. Sletnes acknowledged that Cyprus did have clear motivations and justifications for the actions it took against Turkish interests. The current Cypriot state of mind thus raised the question of whether now is the right moment to make progress on NATO-EU relations.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: The timing may not be ideal for this Nordic effort, but the situation is likely to get worse if they wait. Although the Nordic effort is more structured, the key concern Sletnes and Sipilainen conveyed this afternoon is similar to what we have recently heard at a lower level from the French: the need to focus on the core Turkey-Cyprus issue before broad and irreversible progress on NATO-EU can be made. They also both expressed an exaggerated view of our influence with Turkey and an implied optimism about our willingness to carry the EU's water in dealing with the Turks. END COMMENT

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